

Article

HUNGARIAN NON-PROFESSIONAL DICTIONARIES OF FIRST NAMES: METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE LACK OF LEXICOGRAPHIC AND ONOMASTIC KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

The paper intends to call attention to problems caused by dictionaries of first names made by non-professionals, using such Hungarian dictionaries as examples. The author's main conclusion is that the editors' and authors' lack of lexicographic and onomastic knowledge generally leads to their spreading of incorrect or unreliable information about the origin and etymological meaning of names, or the connection between languages and nations. First, the analysis details the typical characteristics of the three types of non-professional dictionaries (esoteric, anti-Finno-Ugric and ideology-free) compared to professional dictionaries of first names in Hungary, then demonstrates the methodological problems and difficulties of giving the origin and etymological meaning of first names in entries.

Key words: etymology, linguistics, onomastics, first name dictionaries

1. The scientific relevance of the topic

In many languages, a considerable number of first name dictionaries have been compiled by non-professional authors or editors, who do not hold any linguistic, or more importantly, lexicographic and onomastic knowledge. These coexist with the professional dictionaries of first names. Several dictionaries of this type (hereafter referred to as non-professional dictionaries) can be accessed in print and there are numerous online databases and dictionaries of 'baby names.'

One reason behind the profusion of these dictionaries may be the high public interest in first names, especially among expecting parents, which provides a warrantable profit or a

respectable number of users, clicks etc. This is amplified by a common misconception that compiling a dictionary of first names is fairly easy, as anyone can copy and combine information sourced from other dictionaries. However, the truth is that editing a dictionary of first names is a challenging task even for experts. This is especially true when the linguistic origin and the etymological meaning of the first names are defined in the dictionary. Editing such dictionaries requires diversified knowledge of various linguistic fields: knowledge of (1) the history and structure of several languages, (2) the structure of personal names in several languages, (3) the history of the personal name stock in the language in question, (4) lexicography, and especially (5) the typical content and structure of name dictionaries. Compiled without expertise in these fields of linguistics, non-professional dictionaries of first names usually spread incorrect or unreliable information about the origin and etymological meaning of names, as well as about the connection between languages and nations or ethnic groups.

2. The aim and structure of the paper

In the following, some methodological questions connected to the description of linguistic origin and etymological meaning in dictionaries will be presented based on some Hungarian non-professional dictionaries of first names. As the adequate evaluation of the subject matter requires a wider background, first a general picture of professional first name dictionaries in Hungary will be outlined. This will be followed by an overview of the general characteristics of non-professional dictionaries used as sources in the analysis. Then a few comprehensive methodological questions in connection with etymological description are examined. Finally, typical methodological errors will be demonstrated on factual examples collected from the source dictionaries.

3. The structure and content of Hungarian professional dictionaries of first names

As a detailed description of Hungarian name dictionaries was published in English recently (Farkas 2012), this introduction is limited to the most important common characteristics of the dictionaries in question. Although the history of first name dictionaries in Hungary goes back to the end of the 19th century, the current analysis focuses only on dictionaries still available in bookstores or second-hand bookshops, published in the last three decades. Since non-professional dictionaries concentrate on the contemporary and future name stock (correlating to the common interest), dictionaries of historical personal names also fall out of the scope of this paper.

The most important feature of Hungarian professional dictionaries is that they contain only registrable names. Namely, name giving is legally regulated in Hungary: a name is registrable only if it is on the official list of names compiled by linguists. The foundation of this list was a huge amount of names suggested by the public in a campaign in 1970, canvassed by the linguist János Ladó. As a result, he published a dictionary of first names (Ladó 1971), which became the official ground of the registrars' work. Nevertheless, parents who cannot find suitable names for their children in the list, may appeal to the

Committee of Given Names of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. If their application is supported by the Committee, and the registrar accepts the name, it is put on the list. (For further information on the legal regulation of personal name giving, the role of the Committee and the basic principles of acceptance see Raátz 2012.) It should be noted that the members of ethnic minorities may choose names from their own lists, too, compiled by their own (mostly non-linguist) representatives, published in one volume (S. Dávid 2004) with the exception of the name list of the Germans in Hungary, who created their own book of names (Brenner et al. 2004).

Thus, the growth of the first name stock is constant, despite it being controlled officially and linguistically. Consequently, the need for an augmented edition of Ladó's book became apparent, the new version was published in 1998 (Ladó and Bíró 1998). Since 2009, the official list has been available on the website of the Institute (<http://www.nytud.hu/oszt/nyelv/muvelo/utonevek/index.html>), and is updated with the newly accepted names every month. However, these two pdf files (male and female names separately) only contain the names without any other information. This means that little or no authentic information on names accepted after 1998 is available. Certain dictionaries, which contain names selected from the whole name stock, have tried to resolve the situation (Fercsik and Raátz 1997, 2009) but a complete professional dictionary of first names that contains every first name registrable and accepted before 1st January 2017 was published only recently (Fercsik and Raátz 2017). Additionally, the Utónévkereső (Raátz and Sass eds. 2013), an online dictionary with a complex search function on the website of the Institute also intends to provide authentic information (although has not been updated since 2013) (<http://corpus.nytud.hu/utonevportal/>).

Naturally, there are some differences between the contents of these professional dictionaries, although common features outnumber these; for instance, they discuss male and female names respectively (unisex names are not allowed in Hungary), contain the linguistic origin and the etymological meaning of the names, the name days (which are widely celebrated in Hungary, cf. Slíz 2018), and usually variants, nicknames and related names. The encyclopedic type (Fercsik and Raátz 1997, 2009) gives much more information: a short list of famous bearers of the names, data on frequency, traditions in connection with the celebration of saints that bore the name.

4. The types of Hungarian non-professional dictionaries of first names

Hungarian non-professional dictionaries of first names can be grouped into three categories based on the goal of their creators.

The first is the esoteric type: these dictionaries are based on numerology, astrology and the magical belief that a name governs its bearer's fate. They contain the same information as professional dictionaries: linguistic origin, etymological meaning, and name days. However, they associate esoteric information to the description of the name; e.g. numerological data, the characteristics and appearance of the name bearer in a horoscopic way (so-called name analysis by the authors), and at times the biography of a famous bearer. Name analyses are usually based on the etymological meaning; e.g. in the case of **Benigna**: '(Latin) jószágos, kegyes, jóakaró. Feladata megtalálni azt az életterületet ahol szolgálhat.' '(Latin)

benign, charitable, gracious. Her role is to find the field of life where she may serve.’ (Takács 2006b.)

The second type is based on various un-scientific beliefs on the origin of the Hungarians and their language (the affinity to – or more frequently equivalence with – Sumerian, Hun, Scythian, Turkic etc. peoples and languages). Their common ground is the non-acceptance of the Finno-Ugric origin of the Hungarian language and nation (i.e. these theories do not make a distinction between the concepts of language and nation). The commonality of these dictionaries is that they collect and explain names on the basis of an ideology-driven, newly created mythology and a reinterpreted, rewritten history. However, their name stock is eclectic, due to the various concepts of the origin of the Hungarians. Moreover, it is hard or even impossible to examine the sources of the names published in these dictionaries, as they rarely contain bibliographies.

The third type has no special ideological aim, they are published solely for business or because of their creators’ own interests. These books differ from professional first name dictionaries in only one aspect: they are compiled by non-linguists, which leads to several methodological problems in their structure and content, as seen below.

The boundaries between these categories are fuzzy, since the creators of non-professional dictionaries – lacking basic knowledge of linguistics and source criticism – cannot (and do not necessarily intend to) differentiate between scientific and non-scientific information. They usually choose between explanations (which they simply regard as coequal alternatives) based on sympathy and how believable they are to the given author. For instance, a dictionary of the esoteric type entitled *Névmágia* ‘Name Magic’ (Kliment 2005) generally gives authentic information on the origin of names, but sometimes Sumerian etymons appear in it as well. The introduction of the book justifies the decision between the alternative explanations as follows:

(1) ‘*Ősi neveink nagy részének a jelentését nem ismerjük. A rendelkezésre álló magyarázatok pusztá találgatások [...]. Ezek az értelmezések nem-egyszer már-már mulatságosan képtelenek. Így társították az »Apor« nevet az apó szóhoz, az »Árpád«-ot pedig az árpaszemhez. Csupán az az alapvető megfontolás hiányzik: miért neveznének apónak egy újszülött gyermeket, és miért árpaszemnek egy fejedelem utódját? Ma már a nyelvészek és történészek széles táborra bizonyítottan fogadja el a magyar nyelv és kultúra sumér eredetét. Ezen a vonalon haladva lényegesen hiteőbb és életképebb névmagyarázatok születtek.*

‘The meaning of the majority of our ancient names is unknown. Available explanations are pure guesswork [...]. These interpretations are often nearly ridiculously absurd. Thus, they connected the name »Apor« to the word apó [‘old man’], and the name »Árpád« to barley-corn. However, a basic consideration is missing: why would a newborn be called old man, and the heir of a prince barleycorn? Today the Sumerian origin of the Hungarian language and culture is accepted as a proven fact by a large group of linguists and historians. Following this approach, substantially more believable and viable name explanations were born.’ (Kliment 2005: 5.)

As another example, the dictionary entitled *Ősi neveink, aranykincseink* ‘Our Ancient Names, Our Golden Treasures’ (Tolnai 2007) is a representative of the anti-Finno-Ugric category but some of its explanations contain esoteric details; for instance, at the end of the entry *Zsuzsanna* ‘Susan’: ‘*Lehetnek izgulósak, ingerlékenyek.*’ ‘They may be jittery, hot-tempered’ (Tolnai 2007: 481).

5. The general characteristics of the source dictionaries

5.1. Bibliographic data and additional chapters

As it is evident from the References section of this paper, these dictionaries are usually published without basic bibliographic data: anything but the title may be missing; even the editor's name may be hidden in typographic information. Similarly, a common feature of these books is their unprofessional bibliographies (if they contain one): scientific and non-scientific titles mingle, as the editors or authors of the dictionaries have no linguistic qualification to distinguish between the two categories; entries are not in alphabetical order, data are missing, names and titles are written incorrectly. Authors often regard literary works about the conquest and settlement of the Carpathian Basin written in the 19th century as historical sources, when these contain literary names.

Regarding their structure, some of these dictionaries contain no additional sections (Laik ed. 1991, Gyergyel ed. n.d.), but the majority contain at least one or more forewords or afterwords. These sections – independently of the type of the dictionaries – generally accentuate the importance of name choice. Often, they inform readers of the legal regulations governing name giving; mostly correctly but sometimes – incidentally or intentionally – giving false information. For instance: *‘idegen eredetű személyneveknél mind a magyar fonetika szerinti, mind az eredeti írásmód használata megengedett (például Ivett vagy Yvette)’*, ‘personal names of foreign origin can be written based on Hungarian phonetics or according to their original style (e.g. Ivett or Yvette)’ (Kliment 2005: 16). As a matter of fact, foreign spellings are not allowed: names of foreign origin must be written with the letters of the Hungarian alphabet by course of law (subsection 1 of section 4 of Edict 429 of 2017), following pronunciation. Moreover, the form *Yvette* is not present on the list of registrable names. Similarly, the following legal regulation mentioned by the same author does not actually exist in Hungary: *‘Megkülönböztető betűjel szükséges abban az esetben, ha valakinek a neve megegyezik egy jelenkori ismert személyiség nevével.’* ‘A distinguishing letter should be used in cases when someone's name is identical to the name of a contemporary celebrity’ (Kliment 2005: 16).

Csanád Szegedi also made an untruthful statement about how all newly requested names were to be accepted without problem in a radio interview, which was published as a supplementary chapter of his dictionary: *‘kérelmezni kell és most már csak formáság az egész, hiszen minden névre megadják az engedélyt’*. ‘an application has to be made but it has already become a formality, since they [the Given Name Committee – M.S.] authorize every name.’ (Szegedi 2004: 18). In fact, the Committee rejects all names that do not meet the official criteria (e.g. feminine names asked for boys and vice versa, slanderous names, names written in non-Hungarian orthography).

László Tolnai also misinformed his readers. Three years after the name dictionaries of ethnic minorities were published (Brenner et al. eds. 2004, S. Dávid 2004), that is after the start of the legal regulation of majority and minority name giving based on the same principles, he claimed the following in the afterword of his dictionary:

- (2) *‘Míg az első típusú eljárások esetén előfordul, hogy a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia ősi magyar nevet elutasít, és a szülők – beleunva abba, hogy gyermeküknek még mindig nincs születési anyakönyve – más nevet választanak, addig a család a “kisebbségi” jogokra való tekintettel gyermekének akár a Cipőfűző nevet is adhatja.’*

'It often happens over the course of procedures of the first type that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences refuses to acknowledge an ancient Hungarian name leading the parents, who have grown bored of the fact that their child still lacks a register of birth, to choose another name, meanwhile, families with "minority" rights may even choose the name Shoe-lace for their child' (Tolnai 2007: 486).

Esoteric and anti-Finno-Ugric dictionaries usually contain other forewords as well, which discuss topics connected to their ideology with respect to their name stock; e.g. the nature of name magic; principles of numerology; methods of so-called name analysis (cf. Takács 2006a, 2006b); name picking games based on numerology (e.g. Kulcsár ed. 1992); non-Finno-Ugric origin and Hun, Scythian, Sumerian etc. relations of the Hungarian language; the uniqueness of the Hungarian language and nation; the ancient Hungarian runic alphabet, subjective thoughts on the origin and function of the Hungarian name order (surname + first name), statistic analyses of Hungarian demography (the number of births, abortions per year, average lifetime etc.) (e.g. Szegedi 2002, 2004). Moreover, topics that have even less or no connection to name giving may also appear in them randomly; e.g. Hungarian folk art and music (e.g. Tolnai 2007).

Nevertheless, beside these additional chapters, the great majority of these dictionaries do not give any information on the most important topic: the content and the sources of the dictionary, and the structure of their entries.

5.2. The structure and content of the main sections

The main sections of these dictionaries are multifarious: they range from a simple list of names without any information (Nyers 1997) to one-page long entries (Kliment 2005). Similarly to professional dictionaries, they generally arrange names in two sections based on their connection to gender. However, less typical structures can also be found; e.g. grouping names in chapters by their origin (Gyergyel ed. n.d.), or by examining related names in the same entry, independently of their gender connections (e.g. Pál 'Paul', Paula and Paulina; Kliment 2005).

Some of these dictionaries are not void of editorial errors or inconsistencies. Tölgyesi (2006) gives irrelevant information, but only in 5 cases. Mentioning only the most marked example, he writes in connection with the etymological meaning 'purple' of the feminine name **Bíbor**:

(3) 'A bíbor a rangot és a gazdagságot mutatta, és már az ókorban a hatalom jelképe volt. A festéket bíborcsigákából nyerték, és a legmagasabb méltóságok ruháját festették vele. Akkoriban tizenkétezer csigából tudtak néhány grammnyiit előállítani, ezért a bíbor különösen drága anyag volt.'

'Purple signaled dignity and wealth and it was the symbol of power even in ancient times. The paint was gained from rock snails and was used to dye the clothes of the highest dignitaries. At the time it took twelve thousand rock snails to produce only a few grams of dye, thus purple was an exceedingly expensive material.' (Tölgyesi 2006: 12)

Gyergyel (ed. n.d.) put the masculine name *Bonaventura* among feminine names, while Laik (ed. 1991) committed 23 errors in alphabetical order (e.g. *Alinka* preceded *Alinda*, *Fridolin* preceded *Fremont*). The structure of the latter dictionary is confused in its division into chapters, too. Theoretically, every starting letter has a separate chapter but if only 1-3 names start with the same letter, they are added to the previous chapter. For

instance, names starting with Cs are put at the end of the chapter of C (without any indication of this solution), but only among feminine names. Since more than three masculine names start with Cs, their number must have been considered high enough to form a separate chapter. Similarly, N and Ny, U and Ű, V and X are not divided either (however, in the last case at least the title of the chapter – V, X – indicates the contraction). Additionally, two etymologically related names comprise one entry in two cases in Laik (ed. 1991): (1) **Betta, Bettina**; (2) **Szofi, Szófia**. Moreover, entry (1) contains only a hint in brackets for other related names – ‘(Babett, Nerta, Erzsébet)’ – instead of giving the meaning, although the dictionary does not mark the relations between names in other cases.

Finally, it should be noted that anti-Finno-Ugric dictionaries typically also contain names (or words that they claim to be names) which are not official in Hungary. The prototypical examples for this phenomenon are Szegedi’s dictionaries. The second, augmented edition (Szegedi 2004) contains 8186 names¹ and at least 7341 of them, i.e. 89,7% of the whole stock was not registrable at the time of its publishing.² Moreover, lacking methodological chapters, readers cannot distinguish between registrable and non-registrable names. It is presumable that the asterisks after the names serve as signs of the names’ registrable status, although they are missing in the case of 208 registrable names, while they were used in the case of 2 non-registrable names.

Two representatives of the third type (dictionaries without any special purposes) also contain non-registrable names: their proportion is 7,8% in the stock of the dictionary edited by Laik (ed. 1991) and 33,6% in the dictionary by Tölgyesi (2006). The foreword of the dictionary edited by Tölgyesi (2006: 5) indicates the following: ‘*a külön eljárás nélkül adható és a „hivatalosan” elfogadott neveket kiemeltük*’ ‘we highlighted those names that can be given without a special procedure or that are “officially” accepted’. Not mentioning that the commas suggest an ironic interpretation of the word *hivatalosan* (officially), the practical problem is that the description does not mention the method used to highlight. Thus, readers must discern themselves that names in bold type are registrable. The dictionary edited by Laik (ed. 1991) contains no foreword and do not use any sign to distinguish non-registrable names.

However, the cause of this method differs in the case of the two dictionary types. The anti-Finno-Ugric ones use non-registrable names as evidence for the non-Finno-Ugric origin of Hungarians, suggesting that Hungarians should protect their language and their name stock against foreign elements and they should express their national affiliation and pride by using their ancient, long-forgotten names. As Tolnai wrote in a supplementary chapter of his dictionary:

(4) ‘*Áttekintve az elmúlt öt évtizedben megjelent hasonló témájú könyveket, azt látjuk, hogy hozzávetőlegesen sajnos majd’ mind azt sugallja, a magyar nyelvet beszélő nép még saját neveikkel sem rendelkezett. Így aztán különböző más, például görög, latin, héber, gót, szláv vagy akár hottentotta nyelvekből vették át nevüket. Szerencsére ma már egyre többen tudják, hogy ez az elmélet hamis, és az igazság egészen más.*’

‘Surveying books on this topic published in the last five decades, sadly, we can see that almost every one of them suggests that the Hungarian speaking people did not even have their own names. Thus, they took their names from several other languages, such as Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Gothic, Slavic or even Hottentot. Fortunately, in the present day more and more people know that this theory is wrong and the truth is very different’ (Tolnai 2007: 7.)

Contrary to anti-Finno-Ugric ones, Laik (ed. 1991) and Tölgyesi (2006) do not use these names for any special purpose, they only lacked onomastic knowledge. Namely, Tölgyesi – beside professional dictionaries – used Szegedi (2004) as well, while Laik used works (e.g. Galambos 1942, Benkő 1949), which were onomastically creditable but dealt with medieval names which are not necessarily registrable today.

Publishing non-registrable names among registrable ones in first name dictionaries may lead to practical problems: achieving registrable status for a name which is not on the official list requires an authorisation process, as mentioned above, which may end in rejection, causing frustration for the parents. It is necessary to mention the subject in the current paper as non-professional dictionaries add etymological descriptions to these non-registrable names as well. However, these etymologies are unreliable or evidently untrue, since they come from unreliable sources. Moreover, non-professional authors and editors lack the theoretical and methodological knowledge needed to spot the discrepancies and outdated information sometimes present in professional dictionaries, or to distinguish between the origin and the etymological meaning of the name. However, it seems that it is not a Hungarian specialty but a general problem of dictionaries of first names (cf. McClure 2015: 275).

6. Problems in the description of linguistic origin

As the main goal of this paper is to present the methodological errors connected to the lack of onomastic and linguistic knowledge, and not to describe ideologically motivated etymologies, the section will mainly focus on the third, ideologically neutral type of dictionaries. Data taken from these will be sporadically supplemented by examples from the other two types, which are not overly influenced by the unique goals of the authors and editors. Consequently, the primary sources of the following analysis are four name dictionaries published in Hungary since the 1990's (Gyergyel ed. n.d., Győri ed. n.d., Laik ed. 1991, Tölgyesi 2006).

As will be evident from the following analysis, the description of linguistic origin without the proper theoretical and methodological knowledge may lead to several mistakes and misunderstandings. One major problem is that the meaning of the term *origin* is evidently unclear for the non-professional creators of the dictionaries in question. For instance, Tölgyesi (2006) tries to define what types of names can be considered to be of Hungarian origin and creates seven groups in the process. However, the definitions of two of these groups contain logical contradictions. He writes, in the definition of the type called 'names of Old Hungarian origin', the following: '*Mivel a finnugor időkből írásos emlékek nem maradtak fenn, e nevek elsősorban (ó)török és szláv eredetűek.*' 'Since there are few extant written records from the Finno-Ugric period, these are primarily of Turkic and Slavic origin.' The indefensibility of this statement is obvious even to lay readers, as a name of Old Hungarian origin cannot be of Turkic or Slavic origin at the same time. According to the author, names of foreign origin that have Hungarian forms constitute a type in the category names of Hungarian origin (e.g. *Erzsébet*, the Hungarian variant of *Elisabeth*). The problem is evident: a name can only have a Hungarian variant form if it comes from a foreign language. Despite these logical somersaults, the author is right in some respects when he considers the elements of these groups Hungarian. No one would dispute that the names *Gyula* or *Erzsébet* are Hungarian. Nevertheless, a distinction should be made between

‘names of Hungarian origin’ and ‘names considered Hungarian’. Namely, the origin of a name is an objective fact, independent of the judgement of name users (although the categorisation of a name by origin may change due to the current state of etymological research). Meanwhile, a name can be regarded as a member of the name stock of a given language only when referring to a factual time period, area and community of name users, while several extralinguistic factors are taken into account.

The multiple meanings of the term *origin* (referring 1. to the language, 2. to the source or 3. to the linguistic antecedents and constituents of the name), which are usually involuntarily mixed even in Hungarian onomastic literature, may lead to a classification based on entangled criteria. This is clearly exemplified in the dictionary by Gyergyel (ed. n.d.), as its entries are organised in chapters by origin. However, beside the groups that are formed on the basis of the common linguistic origin of their elements, categories based on other criteria are also present. The groups ‘names of ancient origin (Hebrew, Greek, Latin)’ and ‘names that arose recently in another language’ blend the criteria of language and time, while the categories ‘names created by artists’ and ‘names formed from nicknames’ highlight the method of name creation.

Another typical error is the improper ranking of actual names into categories, even if the authors provide veritable information on the origin of a name. The dictionary by Gyergyel (ed. n.d.) can be used as an example again. The female name *Ancilla* is grouped among names of Hungarian origin, although it is an Old Hungarian name formed from the Latin word *ancilla* according to the entry. On the other hand, names which are evidently derived from Hungarian words such as *Nefelejcs* ‘forget-me-not’, *Öszike* ‘meadow saffron’ or *Napsugár* ‘sunray’ are ranked as ‘names that formed recently in another language’, while *Ferenc* (the Hungarian variant of *Francis*) can be found among the ‘names of ancient origin (Hebrew, Greek, Latin)’, although even the dictionary states that it was formed in Italian.

7. Various methods of describing the origin of a name

Beside the errors mentioned above, a methodological question exists that should be apparent and understood by anyone who decides to compile a name dictionary. That is, the linguistic origin of a name can be approached in two ways: on the one hand, meaning the language in which the name was created and, on the other hand, meaning the language from which the name was directly borrowed. In the case of names borrowed through several languages the categorisation is especially difficult, since there are three options for the entry: 1. to give only the language in which the name was originally formed; 2. to give only the language from which the name was borrowed directly; 3. to give both of them and optionally the intermediary languages, too.

Choosing any on these possible solutions depends on several factors. First, on the range of the dictionary in time and space: if it describes the name pool of a given language, country or culture, the language from which the name was received is the most important (so the second or the third option would be the best choice), since this is the only piece of information which authentically reflects the linguistic environment of the borrowing. For example, from this perspective the name *Boldizsár* (‘Balthasar’) should be considered of Latin origin in the Hungarian name stock, as it was borrowed directly from Latin and not from Hebrew, Phoenician, Babylonian or Akkadian (the last is the language in which the name was presumably created, the others are transfer languages).

However, if a dictionary describes the name stock of more than one language, culture or country, the direct source is inapplicable, since different languages may not have received the same name from the same source language. The only possible solution in dictionaries of this kind is to provide the ultimate source, that is the language in which the name was originally created. For instance, the entries of the *Dictionary of Medieval Names from European Sources* (DMNES) contain the variants of the same names in different languages, such as the entry **Margaret** (<http://dmnes.org/name/Margaret>) the English variant *Margery*, the Italian *Rita*, the Spanish *Margarita* etc. The main form, *Margaret* – the original source of all the variants in several languages – comes from Greek, according to the dictionary. The other variants may come from other languages, for instance, the source of the English variant *Margery* is the French *Marguerite*, but this is out of scope from a multinational point of view.

Another factor that influences the decision is the target audience. The second option (to give only the language from which the name was borrowed) may be sufficient for professional purposes, for example in historical dictionaries, which serve as bases for the analysis of the name stock of a given language in a given period by linguistic origin. This solution was applied in the two-volume *Anjou-kori személynévtár* ‘Dictionary of Personal Names from the Angevin Age’ (Slíz 2011-2017), which contains entries of personal names collected from 14th-century deeds written in Hungary. Due to the paternal bynames and name phrases containing the names of ancestors, a considerable number of names from the 13th century are also listed in the dictionary. This was the period when Christian names of mostly Greek and Latin origin gradually marginalised secular names (of Hungarian, Turkic, German, Slavic etc. origin) in the Hungarian personal name stock. Consequently, the significance of giving the language from which the name was borrowed in the etymological notes of the dictionary is evident. Beside the fact that it provides information on the composition of the medieval Hungarian personal name stock by origin, the material of the dictionary serves as a great base for an investigation of the nature of the process as well.

However, if a dictionary of first names is written for the general public, the best choice is the third version (giving the original source and the direct transmitter as well). This method is followed by e.g. the internationally known dictionary of first names by Hanks et al. (2006). The advantages of the third version are clear in this case: (1) giving the language in which the name was created usually facilitates the description of the etymological meaning, while (2) giving the language from which the name was directly borrowed helps to avoid misunderstandings (such as thinking that if a name is of Akkadian or Celtic origin, the speakers of these ancient languages were antecedents, relatives or neighbours of the nations in which the name is used today).

8. Methodological faults in the description of the origin of actual names

Since non-professional authors and editors do not recognise the methodological questions and their solutions mentioned above, some of them shorten the description of a name’s origin by connecting the languages mentioned in their sources as stages of the history of the actual names with hyphens, e.g. Aliz: ‘*héber-germán-francia-angol eredetű*’, ‘of Hebrew-German-French-English origin’ (Győri ed. n.d.). Correlating to the total numbers of German and Slavic dithematic names in the dictionaries in questions, Laik (ed. 1991) used

this method in 36,3% of entries, while Györi (ed. n.d.) in 16,7% (the other two dictionaries give etymologies in sentences).

This method opens the door to several misinterpretations. First, the mentioned languages are generally transmitter and recipient languages but other connections can also appear, e.g. Lelle: *'finnugor-magyar eredetű'*, 'of Finno-Ugric-Hungarian origin' (Györi ed. n.d.). For a reader, who is unfamiliar with the origin of the Hungarian language, it may seem – following the analogy of other descriptions – that the name *Lelle* entered the Hungarian name stock from a foreign language called Finno-Ugric.

Second, it is perplexing if one or more languages are missing from the list of languages in the description, especially when the transmitter language is omitted. For instance, the name *Pedró* is of Greek-Spanish origin according to a dictionary (Laik ed. 1991), albeit it was transmitted to Spanish via Latin. The disarrangement of chronological order, which can be seen in Laik (ed. 1991) 63 times, is also misleading, e.g. *Petróniusz*: *'latin-etruszk'*, 'of Latin-Etruscan origin' (Laik ed. 1991). Sporadically, an ethnic group, nation, state or region is mentioned instead of a language: *Eszmeralda*: *'szemita-görög-spanyol'*, 'of Semitic-Greek-Spanish origin'³ (Györi ed. n.d.); *Leonidász*: *'görög-dór'*, 'of Greek-Dorian origin', *Lizander*: *'spártai-latin'*, 'of Spartan-Latin origin', *Muriel*: *'kelta-angol-normandiai'*, 'of Celtic-English-from Normandy'⁴ (Laik ed. 1991).

Third, mentioning historical periods or dialects of languages in some cases makes the system of describing origin inconsistent. For instance, Laik (ed. 1991) usually uses the names of present languages but in the following cases, she must have tried to be more precise, or did not realise that the term she borrowed from her source was not in the same category as English, German, Latin etc.: *Berill*: *'középid-óind-angol'*, 'of Middle Indic - Old Indic - English origin'; *Blanka*: *'közélatin-spanyol'*, 'of Low Latin-Spanish origin'; *Ernella*: *'őfelnémet-olasz'*, 'of Old High German - Italian origin'.

Fourth, some languages were definitely unfamiliar for Laik (ed. 1991). This is apparent to the professional reader in the case of syntagmatic language names (e.g. *Ottoman Turkish*) in the following descriptions. Namely, hyphens were put between the two elements of the structure (e.g. *Ottoman-Turkish*) as if they referred to two different languages. *Tulipán*: *'perzsa-olasz-német-ozmán-török-magyar'*, 'of Persian-Italian-German-Ottoman-Turkish-Hungarian origin'. (In fact, the proper form is *oszmán* and not *ozmán* in present-day Hungarian.) In the entries of *Gyula* and *Zsombor*, Bulgarian Turkic is handled similarly: *'bolgár-török-magyar'*, 'of Bulgarian-Turkish-Hungarian origin'. The editor's confusion may have been partly due to the fact that the meanings 'Turkic' and 'Turkish' are expressed with the same word form (*török*) in Hungarian. Moreover, she uses different names for the same language inconsistently: she calls Aramaic *arámi* in the entry of *Barabás*, *arameus* in the entry of *Bartal*, *arameus* in the entry of *Tamás*.

Fifth, another methodological error is when not only the origin of the first name but also the origin of the common word which was the source of the name is taken into consideration. For example, the name *Petúnia* is described as of Native American-Hungarian origin (Györi ed. n.d., Laik ed. 1991), because the final source of the phytonym *petúnia* 'petunia' is a Native American language. Similarly, the name *Mirtill* is said to be of Greek-French origin, because 'it is the borrowing of the French female name Myrtill, meaning: from the Greek phytonym myrtle, myrtle tree, blueberry; wreath' (*'a francia Myrtill női név átvétele, jelentése: a görög eredetű mirtusz növénynévből, mirtuszfa, áfonya; menyasszonyi koszorú'*; Györi ed. n.d.).

Sixth, when surveying the description of linguistic origin systematically within a dictionary, the inconsistent treatment of names with similar structures or etymological relations can also be problematic. For instance, in the dictionary edited by Ágnes Laik (1991), the name *Vladimír* is listed as being of Slavic origin, while the name *Vladisláv*, which has not only the same structure but even the same first constituent, is of Old Slavic origin; *Tatjana* is of Latin-Russian-German-Hungarian origin, while *Tánya*, which comes from a nickname of *Tatjana*, is of Russian origin.

9. Methodological problems in the definition of the etymological meaning

As the definition of the etymological meaning is connected to that of linguistic origin, some errors are deducible from the above. In the following, three typical defects will be demonstrated.

First, in the case of names with similar structures or etymological relations, the description of the etymological meaning is often also inconsistent. The professional method for the description of the etymological meaning of dithematic names is to designate the meaning of the two parts respectively (McClure 2015: 276). This method is applied in the above mentioned dictionary in the case of *Vladimír*: '*hatalom + béke*', 'power + peace'. However, the etymological meaning of *Vladisláv* is designated by an attributive structure: '*dicsőséges uralkodó*', 'glorious ruler' (Laik ed. 1991). It is clear that the root of the error is the lack of onomastic knowledge: the editor did not recognize the identical structure of the two names. The discrepancy between the two descriptions was not obvious to her (despite the fact that the entries for the two names are next to each other in the dictionary). The incongruence is more evident in the case of *Tatjana* and *Tánya*: while the meaning of the previous one is listed as 'belonging to the family of Tattius', the other one is defined as 'belle of the ball'. Sometimes the two methods are combined, e.g. *Edvarda*: '*ed előtag birtokra, vagyonra utal, Edwart = vagyonmegőrző, birtokát megőrző*', 'the first part refers to estate, goods, Edwart = preserver of goods or their estate' (Győri ed. n.d.). This type of methodological error can be found in 100% of the total number of German and Slavic dithematic names in Laik (ed. 1991), 86,7% in Gyergyel (ed. n.d.) and 61,3% in (Győri ed. n.d.)

Second, if a name has rival scientific etymologies, it is natural that the presumed etymological meanings are quite different. A typical methodological fault is to give these meanings side by side. Definitions of this type do not allude to the doubtfulness of the etymology, leading to mixed explanations such as *Petróniusz*: '*edzett férfi, ürü*', 'tough man, sheep', *Szörény*: '*komoly, szigorú, mormota*', 'severe, serious, marmot' (Laik ed. 1991). An extreme example for this phenomenon is the anti-Finno-Ugric dictionary by Tolnai (2007). The entries contain several coequal theories:

(5) '*Olivér*: Általában latin eredetűnek tartják, jelentése: olajfáültető. • Lehet germán eredetű, jelentése tündér, manó sereg [!], áradat. [...] Lásd még *Olupta* nevünkénél!'

'*Olivér*: It is generally considered to be of Latin origin, its meaning: planter of oil trees. • It may be of German origin, its meaning is fairy, army of gnomes, flood. [...] See the name *Olupta*!' (Tolnai 2007: 262.)

Although similar references to other entries can be found in the whole dictionary, there is no connection between the data on the origin and meaning of the referred names. For

instance, *Olupta* is described as follows: ‘*Olupta, Olip-tulma, Olup-tolma: A szó jelentése a hő teljessége.*’ ‘**Olupta, Olip-tulma, Olup-tolma:** The meaning of the word is the completeness of heat.’ The reason for references between entries that seem to be unconnected only becomes apparent by reading the descriptions provided in grey frames, which can be found below some entries. For example, below **Olupta**:

(6) ‘O-LiVér, ó-LiVa. Ó, azaz Ódon, ősi LeVe az életnek, ételnek. Az ősök ó-LeVe az oLiVa mindenre jó. Kívül-belül használatos. Kencének, ételnek, gyógyszernek.’

‘O-LiVér, ó-LiVa [olive]. Ó, means old, ancient juice of life, of food. The ancient juice of ancestors, olive is good for everything. It is used internally and externally, too. For salve, food, medicine.’

The background of this description, which contains untranslatable allusions, is a non-scientific theory, which connects words by their (usually accidentally) similar sound. This method dates back to the 19th-century theory of roots, which was applied in the dictionary of Czuczor and Fogarasi in the 1860’s (CzF.). Although its principles and methods became obsolete with the birth of modern linguistics, the dictionary and its methodology are celebrated as evidence for the uniqueness of Hungarian by those who reject the Finno-Ugric origin of the language. (For further information of the theory of roots in Hungarian and the Czuczor-Fogarasi dictionary see e.g. Laakso 2017.)

According to the methods applied in Tolnai’s dictionary (which only correlate partially with the more sophisticated principles of the CzF.), vowels are interchangeable without constraint, because the relation (moreover: the oneness) of words is hidden in their consonants (written usually in capital letters to make the connection evident to readers). This explains the reference between *Olivér* and *Olupta* (although only their beginning is the same) and the rather confusing description (e.g. the reason for mentioning food and life together in the text is that, by chance, they consist of the same letters in Hungarian: *étel* and *élet*). To summarise the methodology used in the dictionary: while the entries relate actual names to several languages (not even trying to choose between different theories or refer to the uncertainty of their etymologies), the grey-framed sections connect the names considered to be of Hungarian origin to other names or random Hungarian common words based on the total or partial similarity of how they sound.

The third type of methodological defect is the use of non-professional sources, which may lead to publishing false information. Fortunately, this problem, which is introduced with the example of *Tekla* in Győri (ed. n.d.), can be seen only rarely in the third type of dictionaries. (The first explanation is correct, since the name is the Hungarian version of *Thecla*, the name of an early Christian saint.)

(7) ‘*jelentése: Isten dicsősége. Másik értelmezés szerint belül üreges igazgyöngyutánzat, mely a párizsi gyártó cégről (Tekla) kapta a nevét*’

‘meaning: God’s glory. According to another interpretation, it is a hollow fake pearl, which was named after the Parisian manufacturer (Tekla)’ (Győri ed. n.d.).

10. Conclusion

This introduction into the types and typical methodological shortcomings of non-professional dictionaries serves three purposes. First, the existence of the esoteric

and anti-Finno-Ugric types reflects not only the great public interest in first names but also the role of these names in ideologies and non-scientific beliefs. In my opinion, linguists should make greater efforts to provide dependable information on first names, not only in professional paperback but also in openly accessible, attractive, constantly updated online dictionaries with complex search functions. It is especially important in the present day, when the main source of information for many is the Internet, and several non-professional but seductive “baby name finders” can be reached online.

Second, awareness of the methodological problems and principles mentioned above may be useful for lexicographers and onomasticians as well, both theoretically and practically. The observation that the non-professional creators did not understand and use the professional dictionaries properly indicates that maybe the entries of professional dictionaries should be more explicit, entries should be rephrased with fewer linguistic terms etc. Additionally, smaller inconsistencies in the descriptions of origin and meaning may be detected in professional dictionaries, too, but the extreme quantity and quality of them in non-professional dictionaries indicates that a higher level of uniformity is needed in the structure of entries and in the descriptions of the same dictionary. It is especially important to decide which interpretation of linguistic origin should be proper for the purposes of the creators and apply the chosen solution consistently (e.g. not giving the language in which the name was made in one entry and the transfer language in another). This would help to avoid misunderstandings in both the public and scientific fields. Additionally, it may facilitate the scientific description of the Hungarian name stock by origin from a diachronic viewpoint. Moreover, using the same methods for the description of origin in all languages would make the comparison of different name stocks easier and more dependable.

Third, the paper intends to call attention to the responsibility of onomasticians in informing non-linguists. Namely, it would be vital to clarify before the general public that editing a dictionary of first names is a scientific task (similarly to making other types of dictionaries), which inevitably requires theoretical and methodological knowledge, and is not equal to copying and compiling earlier dictionaries.

Notes

1. Although the cover promises over 8200 names, while the aforementioned interview (Szegedi 2004: 18) referred to 8400.
2. The cause of this uncertainty is that the official list of registrable names does not contain the dates of when names were accepted. Since Szegedi's dictionary was published in 2004, the safest solution was to compare its content with the stock of Ladó and Bíró (1998), the last paperback edition of the official list. Namely, this is closer in time to Szegedi's dictionary, than the present state of the list, which has been updated with dozens of names since 2004.
3. Moreover, using the word *szemita* for languages or peoples is rather strange and is considered politically incorrect in present-day Hungary.
4. The word *Norman* would not be a sufficient translation in this instance, since Hungarian uses two word forms for its different meanings: *normann* means ‘Norman language or people’, while *normandiai* means ‘someone or something from Normandy’.

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